

STERLING HIGHWAY SCENIC BYWAY PROJECT

The central section of the Sterling Highway, from Skilak Lake Road to Anchor Point, is being nominated for State Scenic Byway designation, to join the remaining sections of the highway, which have already been designated. If State designation is obtained and there is community support, we will proceed with nomination of the entire Sterling Highway as a National Byway, for its outstanding recreation opportunities, its natural & cultural history, and its scenic beauty.

We have received the following community support documents, to date.

Resolutions:

- Kenai Peninsula Tourism Marketing Council
- City of Homer
- Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District

Letters of Support:

- Cooper Landing Chamber
- Soldotna Chamber
- Homer Chamber
- Anchor Point Chamber
- Kenai Peninsula Borough Planning Commission
- Cooper Landing Advisory Planning Commission
- Anchor Point Advisory Planning Commission
- Friends of Cooper Landing
- City of Soldotna
- Soldotna City Council
- Central Area Rural Transit (CARTS)
- Birch Ridge Golf Course
- Ninilchik Senior Citizen Center
- Ninilchik General Store
- Anchor Point Senior Citizens
- Kenai National Wildlife Refuge
- Sacketts's Grill-Cooper Landing
- Pioneer Village – Cooper Landing
- Soldotna B&B, Steven Anderson
- Kenai River Sportfish Association
- Kenai Watershed Forum
- Aspen Hotels, Soldotna
- George and Robin Nyce-Kenai
- Salamatof Native Corporation

STERLING HIGHWAY: SCENIC BYWAY NOMINATION PROJECT

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

QUESTION	RESPONSE
1 <p>What's the difference between <u>State</u> and <u>National</u> Byway Programs?</p>	<p>State Byway designation is recognized by the Alaska Department of Transportation for Alaska's outstanding roads with state significance. Roads can be nominated for its cultural, recreational, natural qualities, scenic, historic or archeological qualities. State designation results in State Scenic Byway signs being put up, limited marketing by the Alaska Byways Program and allows the corridor to be eligible for Scenic Byway funding (lowest priority) from Federal Highways. Highways that are State designated do not have to become Nationally designated unless they want to.</p> <p>National Byway designation is recognized by Federal Highways for outstanding roads of National significance. Highways must first be a State Byway before being nominated for National status and are nominated for the same six qualities listed in State designation. The National Byway Program has two levels of recognition: National Byway and the highest level All-American Road. There are just over 120 Nationally designated roads and less than 20 are All-American. Nationally recognized byways have a Corridor Plan developed by those along the highway to list priorities and improvements for the byway. This grass roots effort is unique to all other Federal Programs. National designation results in the road being marketed by the Byways Program throughout America and to foreign markets. It also allows the road to be eligible for Byway funding from Federal Highways which has granted \$26 million annually. All-American roads get the highest priority followed by National Byways and funding can be used for marketing, making improvements along the byway for interpretive and capital improvements to enhance the travelers understanding and enjoyment of the highway and the landscape it traverses.</p>
2 <p>What are the benefits we would see along the Sterling Highway from having State and National Byway designation?</p>	<p>Both State and National designation offer some degree of marketing and promotional services. State designation has limited funding and resources unlike the National Byways program which has a significant budget and resources. The National Byway program offers \$26 million annually as an 80/20 matching grant program for additional marketing, interpretation and capital improvements along the byway. These marketing projects and improvements must be listed in the Corridor Plan that has been developed by those along the byway for it to be considered for funding. This ensures local control for improvements and priorities of the byway. The Sterling Highway will likely be designated for its outstanding recreational qualities and possible project funding might include river bank restoration, improved fishing access, new restrooms along the highway, improved signage or a new visitor center. These benefit both visitors and those that live along the highway.</p>

STERLING HIGHWAY: SCENIC BYWAY NOMINATION PROJECT

QUESTION	RESPONSE
<p>3</p> <p>Would State or National Byway designation threaten my rights as a property owner?</p>	<p>NO. The official boundary of the Byway is the Sterling Highway road <i>right-of-way</i>. The only regulation associated with Byways is a billboard ban but is of little concern to Alaska that already bans offsite advertising (billboards). In very rare instances (4% of all National Byways) is there any land use or zoning on private land. In Alaska, it is fair to say that the designation will fail if there is any hint of private land use regulations and it is not the intent to do so. Along these few roads that have land use associated with them, they were approved by the existing local government including the local Planning Commission and Borough Assembly. Ideas and priorities generated from the byway planning come in the form of recommendations and must be approved by local government. Control and oversight remains with the Borough Assembly and the designation cannot bypass existing local, State or Federal authority or oversight. The byway group CANNOT make land use regulations without the consent from local government or on public land without approval from the agencies that manage these lands. We all realize that land use restrictions on private land in Alaska will not be supported.</p>
<p>4</p> <p><u>Byway Planning Group</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What is the Byway Planning Group, and what do they do? ▪ Who decides who can or cannot be in the Byway Planning Group? ▪ How will we ensure that it is a balanced representation of corridor stakeholders? ▪ How many people will be in it? ▪ What power does the Byway Group have to make regulations or over-ride other Borough Planning efforts? 	<p>Anyone can be on the Byway Planning Group, which should be composed of the citizens of the Sterling Highway from several communities along the highway. Members also include those with an interest in tourism and recreation including, public lands employees, local government, organizations, economic development advocates, and tourism-related individuals. The consultants will be initially involved in recruiting members to ensure a balanced representation of corridor stakeholders. A comfortable, functional group size of 10-20 is suggested. It is important that the Byway Group is a diverse group including some who may be opposed to the byway idea. Those that do get involved need to be prepared to roll up their sleeves and make a positive contribution.</p> <p>As discussed earlier, the Byway Group makes recommendations for priorities, marketing and making improvements to the highway in the Corridor Plan. They do not have the power to make ordinances, laws or regulations. Byway work including the Corridor Plan would be reviewed and approved by the Borough Assembly. The Byway group does not have direct access to ADOT or Federal Highways to override existing local government.</p>
<p>5</p> <p>How will the Corridor Plan and the Byway Planning Group interface with the Assembly and the other public land Agencies along the corridor?</p>	<p>Ideally, the Byway Planning Group will have representatives from each agency, including the Assembly. A benefit of the byway group is that it becomes a tool for communication and cooperation between many groups. All recommendations including the Corridor Plan and grant applications would come before the Borough Assembly for review and approval.</p>
<p>6</p> <p>Will the Borough Assembly be able to review and comment on the Byway Corridor Plan prior to final approval?</p>	<p>Yes, the Borough Assembly will be a key element to review and make comments on the plan. The Assembly will not have official oversight of the process which is to be a grass roots local effort. The intent is the recommendations come from those that live and work along the highway rather than from the Assembly.</p>

STERLING HIGHWAY: SCENIC BYWAY NOMINATION PROJECT

	QUESTION	RESPONSE
7	Will projects that require Borough maintenance be required to have Assembly approval prior to submitting for a grant?	Yes. Any projects that require the Borough to maintain them after construction will be approved by the Assembly, prior to grant submittal. Many byways have been successful in reducing Borough maintenance by partnering with existing groups and reducing operations costs of new facilities.
8	Can the Byway Partnership Plan override the Kenai Peninsula Borough Comprehensive Plan?	No. The Byway Planning Group should include someone from the Borough Planning Department to ensure compatibility with approved borough plans. The Byway Plan should compliment the Comprehensive Plan and provide more detail for byway issues than the Comp Plan was able to address.
9	What are the qualities we have along the Sterling? And how will we maintain them without new regulations?	The Sterling Highway provides access to World Class Recreation including fishing and access to the neighboring Kenai National Wildlife Preserve and Chugach National Forest. Recreation will be the primary emphasis. Other secondary qualities include cultural, natural, scenic and historic. Access to the quality recreation accessed by the Sterling Highway is already being successfully managed by State and Federal agencies for our fisheries, wildlife and natural resources on the Peninsula. Byway designation would not bypass or remove management by these government agencies. The Byway Group would work with these agencies to develop partnerships to improve and enhance these recreation opportunities for both visitors and those that live along the byway. Partnerships will bring man power, funds and enthusiasm to make improvements including angler access facilities, stream bank protection, trail heads, signage, parking and pull-outs, restrooms and other improvements that can enhance the Sterling Highway.
10	What happens if we don't follow the recommendations in our Corridor Plan?	The Corridor Plan inventories the features along the highway that may need improving, are lacking and that are successful. Since the Sterling will be nominated for its recreational opportunities much of the emphasis will be looking at these facilities. All State and National Byways not only need attractions along the highway to make it a designation such as recreation opportunities but also requires basic facilities for those driving the highway. These include clear signage, public restrooms and rest areas, interpretation along the highway and access to the recreation facilities. These are the basic priorities and recommendations found in a Corridor Plan and these are developed by the Byway Group, people that live and work along the Sterling. The Corridor Plan provides a clear collective direction for improvements that has been endorsed and approved by all parties involved. New projects that are submitted for Byway grant money must be contained within the Corridor Plan or they will not be considered. Should new recommendations be conceived and endorsed for the byway these can be inserted into an updated Corridor Plan. The Plan should be the 'roadmap' for all work along the highway.
11	Who is responsible for the 20% match in the National Byway Grant program? Who would be responsible for maintenance of new facilities?	The 20% match can come from many sources including fundraisers, local organizations or groups, Federal, State or local government, or any non-governmental agency, such as the Kenai River Sport Fishing Association. The Byway designation can stimulate new partnerships to help find matches for funding. The party responsible for maintenance would be determined prior to submitting the grant application. Byway designation can be a springboard for the formation of non-profit groups that hold fundraisers or special events for maintenance of corridor facilities.

STERLING HIGHWAY: SCENIC BYWAY NOMINATION PROJECT

	QUESTION	RESPONSE
12	Who will decide who manages the National Byway yearly stipend? (approximately \$20,000)	Typically this money is used for the operational cost of maintaining the Byway Group and their activities. This money eliminates the need for local government to support the byway's operational needs. The funds are used for basic start-up and on-going costs such as holding byway meetings, sending people to byway conferences, purchasing a PO Box, postage, creating letterhead, becoming non-profit, or hiring an administrator.
13	How can I be sure that ADOT&RF or the Federal Highway Administration doesn't use Byway designation as a tool to impose future land use restrictions within and beyond the road ROW, or as a threat to other funding sources?	The State and National Byway programs, and their associated funding, are completely separate from all other State and Federal road funding sources. If the Byway regulations change in the future, both the State and National byway programs include an opting "out" ability if the Sterling Highway corridor decides it no longer wants designation.
14	Will the Byway Planning Group be allowed political affiliation or advocacy?	No. The Byway Group should not participate in any form of political activism.
15	How will landowners along the Highway be notified about the Byway Partnership Plan.	The Byway Planning Group is responsible for sharing information, gathering ideas, and communicating with the people they represent along the Corridor. Public notice is not required for this project because it does not change any laws or affect the rights of property owners, however the whole intent of the program is to be a locally directed grass roots effort. As a result, the public will be notified of byway activities through newspaper articles, news stories and PSA on the radio, at public meetings and at public events.